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E.O. 12356: N/A
 TAGS: PREL, PGDV, RP, US
 SUBJECT: SFRC HEARINGS: PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: THE SFRC, CHAIRED BY SENATOR LUGAR, MET JAN. 23 TO EXAMINE THE ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES AND TO HEAR THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS ON THE VALUE OF SENDING A HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIAL DELEGATION TO THE FEB. 7 ELECTION. SENATOR LUGAR REGISTERED CONGRESS'S CONCERN ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR FRAUD AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FAIR ELECTIONS. THE NDI/NRIIA TEAM ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO SEND A FORTY PERSON INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER DELEGATION. ASSISTANT SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ TESTIFIED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVED THERE ARE CONVINCING ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF SENDING AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION, IN ADDITION TO THE NDI/NRIIA GROUP. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ADDITION TO CHAIRMAN LUGAR, THE HEARING WAS ATTENDED BY SENATORS MURKOWSKI, PRESSLER, PELL, CRANSTON, BIDEN, DODD AND KERRY. WITNESSES INCLUDED SENATOR PHIL GRAMM; BRIAN ATWOOD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS; KEITH SCHUETTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS; ASSISTANT SECRETARY

OF STATE, PAUL WOLFOWITZ AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, RICHARD ARMITAGE.

3. OPENING REMARKS, REPORTED SEPTTEL, WERE READ BY LUGAR AND CRANSTON AND ESSENTIALLY PAINTED CONGRESS'S CONCERN ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR ELECTION FRAUD IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. ADDITIONALLY, LUGAR DELVED INTO THE AREA OF A HIGH-LEVEL OBSERVER MISSION AND ADMITTED THAT WHILE HE COULD SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A DELEGATION, HE WAS SCEPTICAL THAT SUCH A GROUP COULD ACCOMPLISH ITS GOALS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF RECENTLY IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS BY COMELEC ON FOREIGN OBSERVERS, MARCOS' FAILURE TO RETIRE GENERAL VER AND CONTINUING POOR COVERAGE IN PHILIPPINE MEDIA OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES.

4. SENATOR PRESSLER, IN OPENING REMARKS, STATED HE WAS AGAINST THE IDEA OF SENDING AN OBSERVER MISSION AND ADDED THE US HAD NO RIGHT TO TRY TO IMPOSE US ELECTION STANDARDS ON ANOTHER SOVEREIGN NATION, MUCH LESS AN OLD ALLY. SENATOR KERRY INJECTED THAT HE, LIKE LUGAR, WAS

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UNDECIDED ABOUT THE AN OBSERVER MISSION, ALTHOUGH HE WAS LEANING TOWARD THE IDEA. SENATOR DODD, IN OPENING REMARKS, DREW HEAVILY FROM THURSDAY'S NY TIMES' ARTICLE CONCERNING THE ALLEGED FABRICATION OF MUCH OF MARCOS'S MILITARY RECORD AND SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW ANY ONE COULD HOPE THAT A MAN WHO FOR 40 YEARS HAD DEVELOPED AND HID BEHIND A FABRICATED PAST COULD BE CAPABLE OF HOLDING A FAIR ELECTION.

5. SENATOR PHIL GRAMM, THE FIRST WITNESS, OFFERED CONCLUSIONS FROM HIS RECENT TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES. HE SAID THAT UPON INVESTIGATION, THERE ARE NO BASING ALTERNATIVES TO CLARK AND SUBIC, ESPECIALLY WITH THE GROWING PRESENCE OF THE SOVIETS IN VIETNAM. HE OBSERVED THAT "NO MATTER WHO WINS THE ELECTIONS, OUR POSITION IN THE PHILIPPINES IS SECURE." GRAMM SAID HIS FINDINGS SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THE REAL BOND BETWEEN THE US AND THE PHILIPPINES IS BETWEEN THE US AND THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE, NOT ANY PARTICULAR GOVERNMENT. HE STRESSED "THEY WANT US THERE AND FINANCIALLY, THEY NEED US THERE."

6. IN ASSESSING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES, GRAMM SAID HE WAS DISCOURAGED THAT THE MARCOS GOVERNMENT HAD NOT MOVED TO DEPOLITICIZE THE MILITARY AND NOT RETIRE MORE "OVERSTAYING" GENERALS, BUT THAT THE "GOOD NEWS" IS THAT YOUNG SOLDIERS, MEMBERS OF THE "WE BELONG" GROUP ARE WINNING ADHERENTS AND WORKING HARD TO CHANGE THE AFP INTO AN ORGANIZATION "FREE OF

POLITICS."

7. GRAMM STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING US MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMITMENTS TO THE PHILIPPINES AND NOTED THAT ONLY A STRONG, WELL TRAINED AND WELL PROVISIONED AFP CAN REVERSE THE GROWTH OF THE INSURGENT COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. HE ALSO ECHOED EARLIER STATEMENTS AND STRESSED THE NEED FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. CONCERNING THE IDEA OF AN OBSERVER DELEGATION, GRAMM SUGGESTED HE WOULD ONLY SUPPORT AN UNPREJUDICED ONE WHOSE GOAL IT WAS TO BE NEUTRAL AND NOT TINKER WITH PHILIPPINE POLITICS OR PROMOTE EITHER SIDE.

8. ASKED WHETHER THE US COULD SIMULTANEOUSLY HELP PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND KEEP THE BASES, GRAMM REPLIED "YES, SO LONG AS THERE IS AN EMPHASIS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE, NOT AS AN OUTCOME OF ANY ELECTION, BUT TO PROMOTE THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE MILITARY."

9. WITNESSES BRIAN ATWOOD AND KEITH SCHEUTTE WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE PHILIPPINES WITH THE RECOMMENDATION TO THEIR ORGANIZATIONS AND THE NED TO SEND A 40-MEMBER DELEGATION OF ELECTION OBSERVERS TO THE PHILIPPINES TOOK UP MOST OF THE HEARING TIME DISCUSSING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR RECENT FINDINGS FOR A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION.

10. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION RANGED FROM THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF NAMFREL, THE RELIABILITY OF NAMFREL POLL WATCHERS, THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE NOW DEFUNCT COMPUTERIZED "SUPER QUICK COUNT" PROJECT AND NAMFREL'S OWN "QUICKCOUNT" CAPABILITY.

11. RESPONDING TO LUGAR'S CONCERN THAT FOREIGN OBSERVERS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED CLOSER THAN 50 YARDS TO THE POLLS, SCHEUTTE AND ATWOOD NOTED THAT OTHER CONDITIONS EXISTED WHICH WOULD STILL ALLOW OBSERVERS TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN FERRETING OUT FRAUD, UNCOVERING INTIMIDATION, AND SUPPORTING THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE IN THEIR WISH FOR HONEST ELECTIONS.

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12. SENATOR PELL ASKED IF THE PHILIPPINES REALLY WISH TO HAVE FOREIGN OBSERVERS. THE WITNESSES REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH MARCOS HAD OFFERED THE INVITATION, THERE WERE CERTAINLY FORCES IN THE PHILIPPINES THAT WERE LESS WELCOMING. THEY POINTED TO COMELEC'S RECENT ACTION AS WELL AS SOME COMMENTS SEVERAL PHILIPPINE POLITICIANS HAVE RECENTLY MADE.

13. SENATOR PRESSLER QUESTIONED THE WITNESSES ABOUT THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, THEIR FUNDING SOURCES, THE ROLE THEY PERSONALLY EXPECTED TO PLAY IN PRODUCING A FINAL REPORT AND WHEN THAT REPORT MIGHT BE COMPLETED. ATWOOD SUGGESTED A REPORT COULD BE EXPECTED ABOUT 3-4 WEEKS AFTER THE ELECTION AND THAT SUCH A REPORT WOULD NOT BE ISSUED BEFORE THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE HAVE MADE THEIR OWN OPINION ABOUT THE ELECTION KNOWN, PRESUMABLY THROUGH NAMFREL.

14. SENATOR KERRY QUESTIONED THE WITNESSES REGARDING REPORTS THAT EXTRA BALLOTS MAY HAVE BEEN PRINTED, THAT NEWSPAPERS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE SELECTED TO CONDUCT THE "QUICK COUNT," AND ON THE MANNER IN WHICH NAMFREL WOULD CARRY OUT ITS COUNTING OPERATION. THE SENATOR ALSO ASKED IF THE INSTITUTES' OBSERVERS WOULD EXAMINE THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE ELECTION AS WELL AS THE MECHANICS. THE WITNESSES ASSURED THE COMMITTEE THAT THEIR CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE ELECTIONS WOULD INCLUDE THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING SUCH ISSUES AS VOTER INTIMIDATION AND MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE OPPOSITION.

15. THE ADMINISTRATION WITNESSES BEGAN WITH SHORT ORAL SUMMARIES OF THEIR WRITTEN TESTIMONIES (SENT SEPTTEL). QUESTIONING CENTERED ON THE SAME ISSUES RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MECHANICS OF THE ELECTION. THE WITNESSES RESPONDED LARGELY BY REFERRING TO THE WRITTEN TESTIMONY WHICH COVERED THESE QUESTIONS. SENATOR DODD GRILLED DASD ARMITAGE ON THE NY TIMES STORY ABOUT PRESIDENT MARCOS' WORLD WAR II ACTIVITIES. THE CHAIRMAN ASKED THE COMMITTEE STAFF TO LOOK INTO THE STORY AND THE WITNESS ASSURED THE COMMITTEE THAT DOD WOULD ALSO INVESTIGATE. AS WOLFOWITZ STRESSED THE USEFUL ROLE AN OFFICIAL OBSERVER DELEGATION COULD PLAY AS A DETERRENT TO FRAUD AND A SYMBOL OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO AND SUPPORT FOR PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY. HE SAID A FINAL DECISION WOULD BE REACHED ON WHETHER TO RECOMMEND A DELEGATION AFTER THE HEARING AND AFTER FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS. SHULTZ

END OF MESSAGE

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